Note to Ms. Bárcena

Ethiopia/Eritrea: Meeting of the Witnesses

1. On 27 November, in follow-up to the recent meeting in The Hague, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) issued a statement by which it decided to provide the parties with a list of boundary points, which represent the locations where pillars would be constructed if the parties were to cooperate with the Commission. The EEBC gave the parties twelve months to consider their positions and reach agreement on pillar emplacement. If they fail to do so, the boundary will stand as demarcated by the boundary points on the map, and the EEBC will consider its task fulfilled. In the meantime, the EEBC remains in existence, and the 2002 Delimitation Decision continues as the only valid legal description of the boundary.

2. Yesterday, the United States convened a meeting of the Witnesses to the Algiers Agreements (Algeria, US, AU, EU, UN), to discuss and agree on a joint statement acknowledging the EEBC’s decision. Once approved by capitals and headquarters, the attached text will be shared with the parties and the EEBC before it is issued, possibly sometime next week.

3. The US also informed the meeting that Washington no longer considers itself in a position to continue its diplomatic initiative with the parties, in view of its “difficult bilateral relations with Eritrea.” The US did feel strongly, however, that the next twelve months should be used constructively, and Washington would support any Government or entity that might be in a position to engage both parties, especially Eritrea. DPKO suggested, once again, that resolution of the conflict between the two countries may be best achieved through a “package” approach that includes incentives for both sides. The question, however, remains which Government could take the initiative forward and how to introduce it to the parties. We understand that Washington is consulting several potential European candidates.

Hédi Annabi
6 December 2006

cc: Deputy Secretary-General
Mr. Gambari
Statement by the Witnesses to the Algiers Agreement


The Witnesses commend the efforts of the EEBC to resume demarcation and regret that the EEBC has so far been unable to complete demarcation of the boundary as planned. The Witnesses remain committed to its success and urge the Parties to request and enable the EEBC to resume demarcation as soon as possible, in accordance with the Statement of the EEBC of November 27, 2006, and within the 12-month timeframe of the EEBC.

The Witnesses further urge the Parties to implement their Agreements of June 18, 2000 and December 12, 2000, fully and without qualification. The Witnesses further urge the Parties to comply with all relevant Security Council Resolutions, in particular Resolutions 1640 and 1710, and the requests of the EEBC.

The Witnesses stress the importance for the Parties to engage each other on issues that may arise as a consequence of the delimitation and demarcation of the boundary, as well as the fundamental issues that affect relations between them. Such engagement is essential to sustainable peace and regional stability.

The Witnesses stand ready to facilitate the process and call on the international community to support the process.